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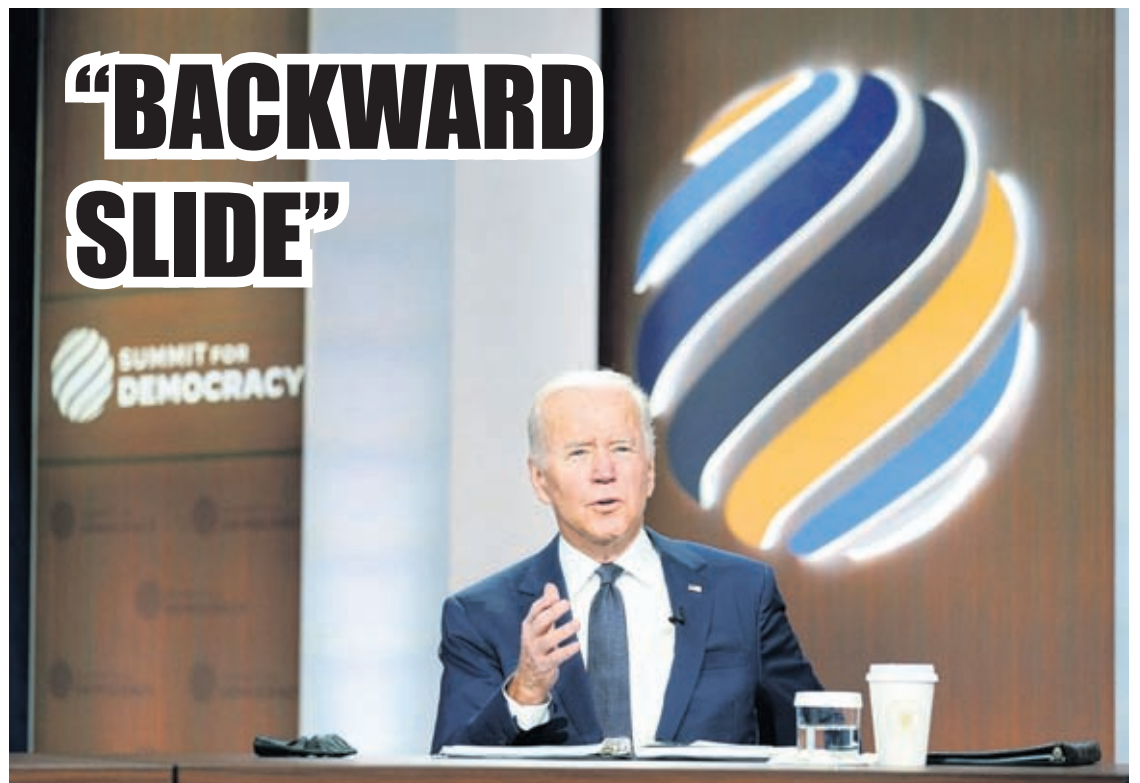
## Biden calls on leaders to end 'backward slide' of democracy

By AAMER MADHANI and  
COLLEEN LONG

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Joe Biden expressed alarm at a "backward slide" of democracy around the globe on Thursday, calling on fellow world leaders to work with him to bolster democratic institutions as his administration grows increasingly concerned about China's and Russia's push for global influence. Biden's comments to more than 100 leaders at the White House's first virtual Summit for Democracy came as they pointed to a host of challenges confronting democracies, including corruption, inequality, and limitations on press freedom. The leaders also expressed increasing worry about the perils of disinformation and

strengthening autocracies. "Will we allow the backward slide of rights and democracy to continue unchecked?" Biden asked. "Or will we together -- together -- have a vision ... and courage to once more lead the march of human progress and human freedom forward?" He didn't mention either China or Russia by name. But he has repeatedly made a case that the U.S. and like-minded allies need to show the world that democracies are a far better vehicle for societies than autocracies. It is a central tenet of Biden's foreign policy outlook — one that he vowed would be more outward looking than his predecessor Trump's "America First" approach.

Continued on next page



President Joe Biden speaks from the South Court Auditorium on the White House complex in Washington, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, for the opening of the Democracy Summit.

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**President Joe Biden speaks from the South Court Auditorium on the White House complex in Washington, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, for the opening of the Democracy Summit**

**Associated Press**

**Continued from Front**

Biden underscored that even long-established democracies, like the United States, haven't been immune to the strains, and he called the moment an "inflection point in history." Local elected officials are resigning at an alarming rate amid confrontations with angry voices at school board meetings, elections offices and town halls. States are passing laws to limit access to the ballot, making it more difficult for Americans to vote. And the Jan. 6 attack at the Capitol has left many in Donald Trump's Republican Party clinging to his false claims of a stolen election, eroding trust in the accuracy of the vote.

"Here in the United States we know as well as anyone that renewing our democracy and strengthening our democratic institutions requires constant effort," Biden said.

Beyond rhetoric, the president announced he was launching an initiative to spend up to \$424 million for programming around the world that supports independent media, anti-corruption work and more.

Thursday's video gathering drew backlash from the

United States' chief adversaries and other nations that were not invited.

The ambassadors to the U.S. from China and Russia wrote a joint essay describing the Biden administration as exhibiting a "Cold-War mentality" that will "stoke up ideological confrontation and a rift in the world." The administration also faced scrutiny over how it went about deciding which countries to invite. China and Russia were among those that did not receive invitations.

Other leaders at the summit delivered their own remarks on the state of democracy — many prerecorded — often reflecting on the stress that rapidly evolving technology is having on their nations. They also bemoaned the increase of disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining institutions and elections.

"The democratic conversation is changing," said Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. "New technologies and large tech companies are increasingly setting the stage for the democratic dialogue, sometimes with more emphasis on reach than on freedom of speech."

The summit comes as Biden

is pressing Russia's Vladimir Putin to step back after a massive buildup of troops on the Ukraine border that has created growing concern in Washington and European capitals as well as Ukraine itself. Biden on Wednesday said that he warned Putin of "severe consequences" if Russia invaded.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who took part in Thursday's summit and later spoke by phone with Biden, said on Twitter, "Democracy is not a given, it must be fought for."

Poland's Andrzej Duda spoke out against Russia in his address, decrying Moscow and its support of Belarus.

Poland and Western allies have accused Russian ally Belarus of using migrants as pawns to destabilize the European Union in retaliation for its sanctions on his authoritarian regime. Hundreds of migrants, mostly from the Middle East, have flocked to the Belarus-Poland border.

Poland "took on a commitment to be a support for democracy in Eastern Europe," Duda said. "It is a beautiful task, but it has its consequences. It has made us the target of the

Kremlin propaganda."

Putin made no public comment on the summit Thursday as he took part in his own video call with members of the Kremlin council for human rights.

Biden has said passage of his ambitious domestic agenda at home — the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill he signed into law, as well as the roughly \$2 trillion "Build Back Better Act" of social and climate change initiatives moving through the Senate — will demonstrate how democracy can improve people's lives.

Some advocates also want Biden to focus more on shoring up democracy at home. One early test came Thursday as the House approved the Protecting Our Democracy Act, the third in a trio of bills — alongside the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act — largely backed by Democrats. All three are expected to be stalled by Republicans in the Senate.

"Here in the United States, we know that our democracy is not immune from threats," Vice President Kamala Harris said in remarks to close out the first day of the summit. "Jan. 6 looms

large in our collective conscience, and the anti-voter laws that many states have passed are part of an intentional effort to exclude Americans from participating in our democracy."

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, said in its annual report that the number of countries experiencing democratic backsliding "has never been as high" as the past decade, with the U.S. added to the list along with India and Brazil.

Chinese officials have offered a stream of public criticism about the summit. They have also expressed outrage over the administration inviting Taiwan to take part. China claims the self-governing island as part of its territory and objects to it having contacts on its own with foreign governments.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan declined to attend the conference. In a statement issued ahead of the meeting, the foreign ministry said, "We value our partnership with the U.S., which we wish to expand both bilaterally as well as in terms of regional and international cooperation."

Yet Pakistan's relationship with the U.S. has been fraught with suspicion on both sides. Islamabad has balked at Washington's often-stated criticism that Pakistan has not been a reliable partner in the war on terror, accusing it of harboring the Taliban even as that group fought a U.S.-led coalition. Pakistan says it has lost 70,000 people to the war on terror since 2001 and is ready to be a partner in peace but not in war. Other uninvited countries have shown their displeasure. Hungary, the only European Union member not invited, tried unsuccessfully to block the EU Commission's president from speaking on behalf of the bloc at the summit. Last year, Biden referred to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban as a "thug."

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto dismissed the summit as a "domestic political-type of event" where countries whose leaders had a good relationship with Trump were not invited. □



# AP-NORC Poll: Income is up, but Americans focus on inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER  
and HANNAH FINGERHUT  
WASHINGTON (AP) —

Americans' overall income has accelerated since the pandemic, but so has inflation — and a new poll finds that far more people are noticing the higher prices than the pay gains.

Two-thirds say their household costs have risen since the pandemic, compared with only about a quarter who say their incomes have increased, according to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Half say their incomes have stayed the same. Roughly a quarter report that their incomes have dropped.

The fast-rising prices that have been surging through the economy have forced many Americans to change their spending habits. About one-third say, for example, that they're driving less often, and roughly 3 in 10 Americans say they're buying less meat than they usually do. In the past year, gas prices have jumped nearly 50%, and the cost of meat is up 15%.

Most people say the sharply higher prices for goods and services in recent months have had at least a minor effect on their financial lives, including about 4 in 10 who say the hit has



Gasoline prices are displayed at a station in Huntingdon Valley, Pa., Wednesday, Nov. 17, 2021.  
Associated Press

been substantial. The poll confirms that the burden has been especially hard on low-income households. On Friday, when the government will issue its latest reading on consumer prices, it's expected to report that inflation soared 6.7% in November compared with a year earlier, according to economists surveyed by data provider FactSet. That would top October's 6.2% year-over-year increase and would mark the highest consumer inflation rate

in nearly four decades.

The findings in the AP-NORC poll underscore the financial pressures that this year's spike in inflation has imposed on many Americans' finances. Still, as they have since before the pandemic struck in March 2020, a majority say their own finances remain good. Yet many Americans have soured on the economy in the past year, even though most economic indicators point to a still-steady recovery, with near-record

job openings, solid retail spending and a rebound in manufacturing. Only about one-third say the economy is "good," down from about half who said so in March. That may illustrate why President Joe Biden hasn't benefited politically from positive readings on the economy.

The poll, though, finds a sharp partisan split: Only about 1 in 10 Republicans describe the economy as "good"; more than half of Democrats say so. Yet when

asked about their own financial situations, people are more positive and less divided along party lines. About two-thirds of Americans say their personal finances are in good shape. Roughly 7 in 10 Democrats and about 6 in 10 Republicans say so.

Analysts generally expect the economy to grow at a brisk 7% annual rate in the final three months of this year, boosting growth for all of 2021 to its fastest calendar-year pace since 1984. The unemployment rate has dwindled to 4.2%, from 6.7% a year ago. And with many employers struggling to hire, the economy still has nearly 4 million fewer jobs than it did before the pandemic.

U.S. households, on average, are earning higher incomes than they did before the pandemic. Wages and salaries grew 4.2% in September compared with a year earlier, the largest annual increase in two decades of records. And the government provided a \$1,400 stimulus check to all households in March as well as a \$300-a-week unemployment aid supplement from March to September. Most households with children began receiving the \$300 monthly child tax credit in July. □

## Court rejects Trump's efforts to keep records from 1/6 panel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court ruled Thursday against an effort by President Donald Trump to shield documents from the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. The three-judge panel said there was a "unique legislative need" for documents that the committee has requested but whose release Trump has sought to block through executive privilege.

The appeals court ruled that the injunction that has prevented the National Archives from turning over the documents will expire in two weeks, or when the

Supreme Court rules on an expected appeal from Trump, whichever is later. The House committee and Trump representatives did not immediately respond to requests for comment Thursday.

Trump sued the House Jan. 6 committee and the National Archives to stop the White House from allowing the release of documents related to the insurrection. President Joe Biden had waived Trump's executive privilege claims as the current officeholder.

The National Archives has said that the records Trump wants to block include presidential diaries, visitor logs, speech

drafts, handwritten notes "concerning the events of January 6" from the files of former chief of staff Mark Meadows, and "a draft Executive Order on the topic of election integrity."

Arguing for the committee, U.S. House lawyer Douglas Letter argued that the determination of a current president should outweigh predecessors in almost all circumstances and noted that both Biden and Congress were in agreement that the Jan. 6 records should be turned over.

All three of the appeals court judges who heard the arguments were nominated by Democrats. Millett and Judge Robert Wilkins



President Donald Trump speaks during a rally protesting the electoral college certification of Joe Biden as President in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

were nominated by former President Barack Obama. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is a Biden appointee

seen as a contender for a Supreme Court seat should one open during the current administration. □



# Scenic stretch of Lost Coast redwoods to be spared the ax

By **BRIAN MELLEY**  
Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — California's rugged Lost Coast is about to become less forbidding.

A conservation group on Thursday said it planned to purchase a 5-mile (8-kilometer) stretch of the rugged coastline from a lumber company to protect it from logging and eventually open it up to the public. Save the Redwoods League said it agreed to purchase the DeVilbiss Ranch for nearly \$37 million if it can raise the money by the end of the year.

"This is a piece of California that inspires," said Sam Hodder, the league's president and CEO. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The property sits at the southern end of the largely undeveloped Lost Coast, an unruly landscape untamed by highways and surrounded by timberlands off-limits to the public.

Forested hills on the ranch plunge to isolated beaches. Waves crash into sea stacks. Lush forests teem with green ferns and thick moss. Redwoods and firs up to a century old tower overhead. Two creeks harbor coho salmon and steelhead trout. Grasslands and



In this photo provided by Save the Redwoods League is the Lost Coast Redwoods property near Rockport, Calif., on Dec. 2, 2021.

woods are home to Roosevelt elk, deer, and mountain lions. Habitat supports endangered species such as the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet and Pacific fisher.

Some old-growth redwoods remain on the ridge-line where strong winds snarled their tops, making them less valuable as lumber and sparing them the saw blade.

The property near Rockport, 155 miles (250 kilome-

ters) north of San Francisco, is the largest privately owned section of California coastline in the redwood range that runs from Oregon to Big Sur, Hodder said.

It's being sold by Soper Co., parent of Soper-Wheeler, which is leaving logging after 160 years of family ties to the business.

"You'd be hard pressed to find 5 miles of coastline for sale without going to a third world country," said Aric

Starck, executive chairman of Soper and a member of the family that owns it. "This one is very unique."

Logging companies, ranches and other conservation groups also bid on the property, Starck said.

The 5-square-mile (13 square kilometer) property was selectively logged so it doesn't feature gaping clear-cuts found in some timberlands, Hodder said. Much of the forest is second-growth redwoods 80

to 100 years old and topping 200 feet (61 meters) in height.

Soper is selling its lands because it's gotten harder to make a profit in a timber industry that has consolidated and faces tougher environmental restrictions, Starck said. Like other multi-generational family businesses, it has run into the problem of having a growing number of heirs with interests outside logging.

The company has sold all but a fifth of the 172 square miles (445 square kilometers) of land it began selling three years ago. It plans to sell all of its acreage by the end of next year.

"It's a sad point in the company's history," Starck said. "These are truly unique properties and it's always hard to part with them."

The area was aggressively logged since the late 1800s and most of the area was cleared by the turn of the last century, Hodder said. Only 5% of all old-growth coast redwoods — the tallest trees on the planet — remain today.

Logging and other private lands kept much of the Lost Coast area off limits until the 1970s when the King Range National Conservation Area was created. □

Associated Press

# 2021 is now the highest-winning year ever for U.S. casinos



A dealer conducts a game of roulette in Bally's casino in Atlantic City, N.J. on June 23, 2021.

Associated Press

By **WAYNE PARRY**  
Associated Press

**ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP)** — America's casinos have won more money this year

than ever before, according to figures released Thursday from a national gambling trade association.

The American Gaming Association said U.S. casinos have already broken the record for most money won in a single year at \$44.15 billion.

Those figures are based on reports through October, as well as on a handful of states that have released results from November.

The total surpassed the record set in all of 2019, which was \$43.65 billion.

And with many more states still to report November revenue figures, as well as all the December reports, that number will climb even higher. The figures do not include tribal casinos.

October highlights nationwide include in-person gambling continuing to drive the industry's recovery, with brick-and-mortar

activity generating \$3.97 billion, topping pre-pandemic totals by 16% from October 2019.

Americans wagered a record \$7.05 billion on sports in 25 jurisdictions in October, bringing the year-to-date total amount bet to \$42.19 billion. That is nearly double the amount wagered in all of 2020 when just 17 markets were operating.

With some data yet to be reported, commercial sports books kept nearly \$408 million after paying out winning bets and other expenses in October, surpassing the previous monthly record of \$405 million set in September. Internet gambling generated \$357 million in revenue, up 129% from October

2020, which is also a new monthly record.

And Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania and South Dakota surpassed annual state revenue records. Connecticut launched sports betting and internet gambling in October.

Combined October revenue from traditional casino gambling, sports betting and internet betting was \$4.75 billion, the second-highest monthly total ever and an increase of 30.7% compared to October 2019.

The industry has now surpassed \$4 billion in monthly gambling revenue for eight consecutive months. Before this year, monthly revenue had never topped \$4 billion. □



# U.S. orders arms embargo on Cambodia, cites Chinese influence

**BANGKOK (AP)** — The U.S. has ordered an arms embargo on Cambodia, citing deepening Chinese military influence, corruption and human rights abuses by the government and armed forces in the Southeast Asian country.

The added restrictions on defense-related goods and services, issued by the State and Commerce departments, are due to be published and take effect Thursday.

A notice in the Federal Register said developments in Cambodia were “contrary to U.S. national security and foreign policy interests.”

The aim of the embargo is to ensure that defense-related items are not available to Cambodia’s military and military intelligence services without advance review by the U.S. government, it said.

The latest restrictions follow the Treasury Department’s ordering in November of sanctions against two senior Cambodian military officials for corruption and come amid increasing concern about Beijing’s sway.

At the time, the U.S. government issued an advisory cautioning American businesses about potential exposure to entities Cambo-



**Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, left, talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen as they sit to witness a signing ceremony for a free trade agreement at Peace Palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Monday, Oct. 12, 2020.**

dia and its military that “engage in human rights abuses, corruption and other destabilizing conduct.”

Cambodia branded those sanctions as “politically motivated” and said it would not discuss them with Washington.

The U.S. has similar controls on exports of items that might be diverted to “military end users” in Myanmar, China, Russia and Venezuela.

U.S. exports to Cambodia in 2019 totaled \$5.6 billion. The amount of military-related U.S. exports to Cambodia was not immediately available. The U.S. is the largest export market for Cambodia, a major garments manufacturing hub, but three-quarters of Cambodia’s imports are from China and other countries in Asia.

The U.S. halted military assistance to Cambodia follow-

ing a 1997 coup in which the country’s leader, Hun Sen, grabbed full power after ousting his co-premier, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. Hun Sen remains prime minister. In August 2005, President George W. Bush waved the ban, citing Phnom Penh’s agreement to exempt Americans in Cambodia from prosecution by the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court.

Since direct military ties between the two countries were restored in 2006, the U.S. has pledged millions in military aid to Cambodia, initially to help improve its border security and peace-keeping operations.

China is Cambodia’s biggest investor and closest political partner. It was the chief backer of the murderous regime of Pol Pot in the 1970s and has long maintained strong relations with Hun Sen, who has ruled for more than 30 years and grown increasingly repressive.

Beijing’s support allows Cambodia to disregard Western concerns about its poor record in human and political rights, and in turn Cambodia generally supports Beijing’s geopolitical positions on issues such as its territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The construction of new Chinese military facilities at Cambodia’s Ream Naval Base is a point of strong contention with Washington.

Ream faces the Gulf of Thailand, adjacent to the South China Sea, where China has aggressively asserted its claim to virtually the entire strategic waterway. □

**Associated Press**

# Africa CDC: Nations might turn to COVID-19 vaccine mandates

**By CARA ANNA**

**NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)** — African governments might have to resort to COVID-19 vaccine mandates if their citizens don’t hurry to get the increasingly available doses, the director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday.

The warning by John Nkengasong to reporters that governments “will not have a choice” came as the flow of doses to Africa’s 54 countries grows but vaccine hesitancy and the short shelf life of some donations create new pressures to get them into the arms of the continent’s 1.3 billion people.

“We don’t need to get there if we just do the right thing,” Nkengasong said

of vaccine mandates. He called any lack of interest in vaccine uptake “extremely unfortunate” after African officials have fought for months against dramatic vaccine inequality between their nations and richer ones around the world.

Africa remains the world’s least vaccinated continent against COVID-19, with less than 8% of the continent’s population fully jabbed.

Now the rapidly spreading omicron variant, first identified in southern Africa and now reported in 11 African countries, is driving a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases on the continent. New cases in the past week surged by 93%, the World Health Organization said, though “there are signs of hope as

preliminary data indicates that hospitalizations across South Africa remain low” and the new variant might cause less severe illness.

Only six African countries have met the global target of vaccinating 40% of their populations against COVID-19 by the end of this year, and “this is simply dangerous and untenable,” a WHO immunization official, Richard Mihigo, told reporters on Thursday. Some countries including Zimbabwe and Ghana have turned to vaccine mandates for public employees and others, not without objections. Kenya’s plan to require COVID-19 vaccinations for access to government services starting later this month has brought criticism.



**A woman, with her baby on her lap, gets vaccinated against COVID-19 at a site near Johannesburg, Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

African nations have procured 431 million vaccine doses so far and administered 245 million, the Africa CDC’s Nkengasong

said, adding that “you can’t even talk of a booster when you have people who haven’t received their first dose.” □



# Russia military chief warns Ukraine against attacking rebels

By **DASHA LITVINOVA and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV**  
**Associated Press**

**MOSCOW (AP)** — Russia's top military officer on Thursday sternly warned neighboring Ukraine against trying to reclaim control over separatist areas by force, saying that Moscow will "suppress" any such attempt.

The statement by Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian military's General Staff, comes amid soaring tensions over a Russian troop buildup near the border with Ukraine that stoked Ukrainian and Western fears of a possible invasion.

A senior Russian diplomat doubled down on Gerasimov's warning by saying that the failure to stem the mounting tensions could push Russia and the West to a redux of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis that put the world on the verge of a nuclear war.

U.S. President Joe Biden warned his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in a video call Tuesday that the West would respond with bruising economic sanctions that would inflict acute pain on Moscow if it invades Ukraine. At the same time, Biden made it



**Serviceman walk in a trench at the line of separation near Sentianivka, Luhansk region, controlled by Russia-backed separatists, eastern Ukraine, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

clear Wednesday that U.S. troops wouldn't be sent to Ukraine to confront the Russians, and announced future talks between the U.S., its top NATO allies and Russia to address some of Moscow's security concerns. Russia has rejected Ukrainian and Western claims of plotting an attack and described them as a cover-up for a possible attempt by Ukraine to retake the rebel-held areas. Ukraine has denied such plans.

On Thursday, Gerasimov

reinforced Moscow's warning to Ukraine not to try to use force to reclaim control of the east, saying that "any provocations by Ukrainian authorities to settle the Donbas problems by force will be suppressed."

U.S. intelligence officials say Russia has stationed about 70,000 troops near its border with Ukraine and has begun planning for a possible invasion as soon as early next year.

British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace told a press

briefing in Stockholm that "President Putin would face a severe economic response, a severe diplomatic response from the international community" if he launches an attack on Ukraine. "I don't think Russia wants those consequences, I don't think it will help everyone, especially at this time with COVID, for these things to play out," he added. Speaking to foreign military attaches, Gerasimov dismissed Western concerns about the Rus-

sian military buildup, arguing that Moscow is free to deploy its troops wherever it likes on its territory and calling the claim of a possible Russian invasion "a lie." He charged that Ukraine is to blame for escalating tensions in its war-torn eastern industrial heartland, known as Donbas, by deploying new weapons there, including U.S.-supplied Javelin anti-tank missiles and Turkish drones.

Russia and Ukraine have been locked in a bitter tug-of-war since 2014, when Moscow annexed the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula and threw its support behind a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine that has killed more than 14,000 people. Ukraine and the West accused Russia of sending troops and weapons to back the separatists, which Moscow has repeatedly denied.

Gerasimov complained about NATO's growing presence near Russian borders and the increasing number and scope of drills by alliance troops. He particularly noted an increase in patrol flights by U.S. strategic bombers near Russian territory, saying they practiced launching cruise missiles at targets in Russia. □

# Puerto Rico mayor, official charged in U.S. corruption case



**Mayor Angel Perez Otero, right center, accompanies President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump on a walking tour to survey hurricane damage and recovery efforts in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, Oct. 3, 2017.**

**Associated Press**

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)** — Federal agents arrested

the mayor of one of the wealthiest cities in Puerto

Rico on corruption charges Thursday, the second such case announced this month.

Guaynabo Mayor Ángel Pérez Otero faces three counts, including bribery and extortion. He is accused of regularly accepting payments of \$5,000 in exchange for awarding contracts to the owner of a construction company.

The indictment alleges that the scheme ran from 2019 to 2021 and accuses the two of meeting in secret places and of using coded text messages.

No one answered the phone at his office on Thursday and it was not immediately clear if Pérez had an attorney. He was sworn in as mayor in August 2017

following a special election after the former mayor, Héctor O'Neill, pleaded guilty to sexual harassment, gender violence and violating an ethics law.

Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi said in a statement that he was disappointed and extremely upset about the arrest. He demanded that Pérez resign immediately as mayor and as president of Puerto Rico's Federation of Mayors.

In early December, federal officials announced that former Cataño Mayor Félix Delgado pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit bribery and receive kickbacks after he was accused of awarding 50 contracts worth nearly \$10 million to an asphalt company.

U.S. Attorney Stephen Muldrow said that Radamés Benítez Cardona, the executive assistant of the mayor of Trujillo Alto, also was arrested on federal charges including bribery and extortion. He said Benítez is accused of receiving a \$200,000 advance payment and more than \$17,000 a month from a solid waste company in exchange for securing a government contract for them.

Benítez pleaded not guilty. Federal authorities said other investigations are ongoing.

"This is just the beginning," said Joseph González, special agent in charge of Puerto Rico's FBI office. "Our work is not done." □



# Witness, official: Myanmar troops massacre 11 civilians

**BANGKOK (AP)** — Myanmar government troops rounded up villagers, some believed to be children, tied them up and slaughtered them, according to a witness and other reports. An opposition leader said the civilians were burned alive, as repression of resistance to a de facto coup takes an increasingly brutal turn.

A video of the aftermath of Tuesday's assault — apparently retaliation for an attack on a military convoy — showed the charred bodies of 11 people, lying in a circle amid what appeared to be the remains of a hut.

Outrage spread both inside and outside Myanmar as graphic images were shared on social media of the assault, which Human Rights Watch said was similar to other recent attacks — and looked like it was meant to be discovered.

"This incident is quite brazen, and it happened in an area that was meant to be found, and seen, to scare people," researcher for the group, Manny Maung, said. "Our contacts are saying these were just boys and



In this June 20, 2017, file photo, United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric fields questions for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during his first press conference with U.N. correspondents, on World Refugee Day, at U.N. headquarters.

Associated Press

young people who were villagers who were caught in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Opposition spokesperson, Dr. Sasa, said the attack began after a military convoy — which was raiding villages in the country's northwest — hit a roadside bomb. Troops retaliated first by shelling the village of Done Taw, then round-

ing up anyone they could capture there.

"They were lashed together, tortured, and ultimately burned alive," he said, adding that the victims ranged in age from 14 to 40.

"The sheer brutality, savagery, and cruelty of these acts shows a new depth of depravity, and proves that, despite the pretense of the relative détente seen over

the last few months, the junta never had any intention of deescalating their campaign of violence," said Sasa, who uses one name and is the spokesperson for Myanmar's underground National Unity Government.

That group declared itself the country's only legitimate leaders in the wake of the military takeover

on Feb. 1 that prevented elected lawmakers from taking their seats in parliament. The seizure of power was initially met with non-violent street protests, but after police and soldiers responded with lethal force, violence escalated as opponents of military rule took up arms. In recent months, fighting has been raging in northwestern areas.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric expressed deep concern at the reports of the "horrific killing of 11 people" and strongly condemned such violence, saying "credible reports indicate that five children were among those people killed."

The government has denied that it had any troops in the area. But a witness told The Associated Press that about 50 troops marched into Done Taw at about 11 a.m. Tuesday, seizing anyone who did not manage to flee.

"They arrested 11 innocent villagers," said the witness, who described himself as a farmer and an activist and spoke on condition of anonymity because he fears for his safety. □

# First migrants returned under 'Remain in Mexico' policy

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — U.S. authorities sent the first two migrants back to Mexico on Wednesday under the reinstated "Remain in Mexico" policy.

The Trump-era policy makes asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court.

The U.N. International Organization for Migration said the two migrants were sent to Mexico over a bridge in Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso, Texas. The U.N. agency did not provide the nationalities of the two.

The two were greeted by Mexican officials who provided them with documents, and U.N. officials gave them coronavirus tests and took them to a shelter. Mexico says the U.S. government has agreed to vaccinate all migrants re-

turned under the program. The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden reinstated the policy Monday to comply with a court order and agreed to changes and additions demanded by Mexico.

The returns were scheduled to begin in El Paso with up to 50 migrants to be returned daily to Ciudad Juarez, said a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because details were not made public.

The Homeland Security Department confirmed that returns began at one location and will be expanded to six others. It declined to identify the launch city or how many migrants will be processed, citing "operational security reasons."

Revival of the "Remain in Mexico" policy comes even as the Biden adminis-

tration maneuvers to end it in a way that survives legal scrutiny. Biden scrapped the policy, but a lawsuit by Texas and Missouri forced him to put it back into effect, subject to Mexico's acceptance.

The U.S. has pledged to try to complete cases within 180 days, a response to Mexico's concerns that applicants will languish in a court system that is backlogged with 1.5 million cases. About 70,000 asylum-seekers were forced to wait in Mexico, often for months, under the policy that President Donald Trump introduced in January 2019 and which Biden suspended on his first day in office.

Biden's version expands the policy to migrants from Western Hemisphere countries, while Trump largely limited it to the hemi-



Asylum seekers wait for news of policy changes at the border on Feb. 19, 2021, in Tijuana, Mexico.

Associated Press

sphere's Spanish-speaking countries. Mexicans continue to be exempt.

The expansion is especially significant for Haitians, who formed a huge camp in the Texas border town of Del Rio in September. Brazilians, who were largely spared under Trump, may also be

heavily affected.

U.S. authorities will ask migrants if they fear being returned to Mexico instead of relying on them to raise concerns unprompted. If migrants express fear, they will be screened and have 24 hours to find an attorney or representative. □



# LOCAL



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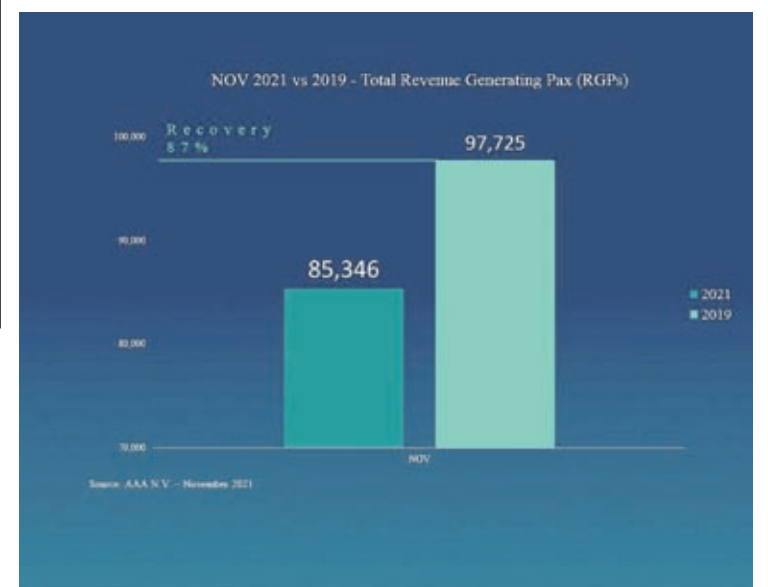
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## 85,346 Passengers departed in November 2021



**ORANJESTAD – Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA) reports as follows on Queen Beatrix International Airport's (AUA Airport) performance for November 2021; another month with yet another satisfying recovery rate versus the same period in 2019.**

In November 2021, AUA Airport handled 85,346 departing passengers. This was 13% more than the month before. During the past month AUA Airport recovered 87% of the amount of departing passenger that were handled in 2019 during that same month. In November 2021 65,928 passengers (pax) travelled to the US, 2,442 pax to Canada, 6,397 pax to Europe, 3,638 pax to the Netherlands Antilles, and 6,941 pax to Latin America.

An average outbound passenger load factor (PLF) (number of seats of the total seats on board an aircraft that are occupied when departing from AUA Airport) for the US Market of 74% was reported during the month of November 2021, while the average PLF for all markets was at 76% during that same period (in comparison to 2019 where the PLF for all markets of 85% was reached).

During the past month, AUA Airport averaged 30 flights per day, down from 35 daily flights during the same period in 2019. In that same period in 2020 we only handled a total amount of 481 flights whilst our national border reopened in July of 2020 for all commercial operations. ☐

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Scan QR-Code and find locations and opening hours at: [www.covidaruba.com](http://www.covidaruba.com).



Note: It is required for guests to bring their passports to the appointment. The use of a face mask is mandatory.

Location list:

1. Noord Medical Center – For all outbound/ departing



**Urgent  
Care  
Aruba**


- passengers
2. Urgent Care Aruba – For all outbound/ departing passengers
  3. COVID Test Center Benu Oliva Superfood Plaza – For all outbound/ departing passengers
  4. Medlab Shaba – For all outbound/ departing passengers
  5. Medlab Centro Medico San Nicolaas – For all outbound/ departing passengers
  6. Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino – For guests staying at the resort
  7. Marriott's Aruba Surf Club – For guests staying at the resort
  8. Holiday Inn Resort Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
  9. Playa Linda Beach Resort Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
  10. RIU Palace Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
  11. Hotel RIU Palace Antillas – For guests staying at the resort

12. Eagle Aruba Resort & Casino – For guests staying at the resort
13. Costa Linda Beach Resort – For guests staying at the resort
14. Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort – For guests staying at the resort
15. Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa – For guests staying at the resort
16. Casa del Mar Beach Resort & Aruba Beach Club – For guests staying at the resorts
17. Caribbean Palm Village Resort – For guests staying at the resort


For more information, visit [www.covidaruba.com](http://www.covidaruba.com), email [covid@lab.aw](mailto:covid@lab.aw), Invoice request [Shakira.philips@lab.aw](mailto:Shakira.philips@lab.aw), Noord Medical Center Noord 63 +297 586 1600, WhatsApp Customer Care +297 699 5551. □



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## “Deep Love Art Exhibition”, This weekend by local artist Steve Francees

**EAGLE BEACH** — As Edgar Degas said, Art is not what you see, but what you make others see. This weekend starting today, Friday December 10th will start an Art Exhibition of the local artist Steve Francees, known for his unique Aruba landscape photos and also the producer of the “Aruba Jerusalem Dance” video in 2020 with over 2.5 million views on his Youtube channel.

For the last 2 years Francees took his brushes and pen back and started doing sketching of local architecture from the 1900's and up. Bringing back Aruba's history in sketching using watercolors. There are not many artist in watercolors so this is why you must visit



this Exhibition. Francees last exhibition was in the Netherlands two months ago in ‘Heroes Made in Asia’ year. which will also be part of “Deep Love Art Exhibition” the Dutch Comic Con next will take place at Santos

Coffee with Soul at Casa Del Mar Beach Club from 6pm till 9pm. The Exhibition will continue over the weekend from 9am to 6pm. During the exhibition Francees will do life Sketching and everyone is invited to attend. Entrance is completely free.

The majority of the photos in this exhibition have never been posted on any social media and are from his private collection. He is a very passionate photographer and do have superb Aruba photos and sure you have seen one of them on social media. You can talk to him and greet him in person during this weekend. Come see his colorful sketching and photos and support a local artist.☐

## Aruba has a law that limits the use of tobacco products

**ORANJESTAD** — Recently, the parliament of Aruba approved the law “restriction of tobacco products.”

This law regulates and limits tobacco product use, particularly cigarettes, to elevate the long-term life quality and life span. This law is essential for public health. Cigarette smoking is not only hazardous to your health, but also persons who live, or are constantly near persons who smoke, namely second-hand smokers. In Aruba, 12.6% of



the population aged 20 years and older smoke. Studies show that the use of cigarettes increases the risks of non-communicable diseases. These are long cancer, throat cancer, COPD, heart disease, diabetes type 2, obesity, and many more. Therefore, the introduction of this law in Aruba is essential for our community's health. Smoking and its health consequences are a problem around the world. Various countries try to limit and regulate it. Aruba and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), follow the “Best Buy” strategy of the World Health Organisation (WHO). In 2020 they made a National Prevention

Plan to reduce non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and more. An essential point in the plan is to

help with the prevention of NCDs s the introduction of a law to regulate and limit the use of cigarettes. Now that the law is approved, the process of implementation and supervision of the law follows. The law will take effect on January 1, 2022, with a transition period to allow cigarette smokers, commerce, and the community to adapt to the new law. After the transition period, the departments in charge of the supervision will start to control the implementation and can give fines for non-compliance, if necessary.

The Department of Public Health will continue to inform about the law's content, implementation, and supervision in the following weeks. With the introduction of this law, public health takes an enormous step in prevention and towards a healthier future.☐



# CVS Health maps out path to steer into primary care delivery

By **TOM MURPHY**

CVS Health is launching a plan to use telemedicine, new clinics and teams of doctors, nurses and pharmacists to push deeper into managing customer health.

The health care giant on Thursday outlined a future that it expects to be defined by delivering care with what it sees as a unique mix of resources. The company runs thousands of drugstores, manages prescription benefits and also sells health insurance, in addition to its care expansion.

"We are closer to the consumer than anyone else," CEO Karen Lynch told analysts during a webcast of the company's annual investor meeting.

The company says it intends to add a few hundred primary care centers to its mix of drugstores and "HealthHUB" locations it started introducing a few years ago. The company aims to open about 1,000 of those HealthHUBs this year. Those locations can include regu-



CVS Health products are displayed at a store, Monday, May 3, 2021, in North Andover, Mass.

Associated Press

lar drugstore services plus employees like dietitians. The clinics will include a doctor-led care team that also may include social workers and mental health specialists.

The goal of this approach is to give customers an easier way to keep up with their health and stay in regular contact with different care

providers, depending on what they need. That can lead to lower costs and better health, especially for people with chronic conditions or those who don't have a regular doctor.

Lynch said Thursday that primary care makes up only about 10% of national health care spending but "it wields significant influ-

ence over health care utilization."

She told analysts last month that company leaders believe they need to "push into the primary care so that we can influence the overall cost of care."

CVS Health isn't alone in its ambition. Drugstore rival Walgreens and other health care companies like

UnitedHealth Group Inc. also have moved deeper into providing health care. They're all competing to become regular guides for customers through the complicated U.S. care system.

Walgreens, for instance, is attaching hundreds of VillageMD primary care practices to its stores over the next few years.

A big target for this competition: Millions of aging baby boomers who will need more regular care and have coverage through government-funded plans like Medicare Advantage.

CVS Health is introducing this push while it also deals with a staffing shortage in some of its drugstores, which have been seen waves of COVID-19 vaccinations and tests and could soon be handling pill treatments for the virus.

The company has said it hired about 23,000 employees from a push it started in September. About half of that total was pharmacy technicians, who can deliver vaccines. □

# Airlines face holiday test as demand surges

By **DAMIAN J. TROISE**

The airline industry's recovery is being tested this holiday season as passengers return in near pre-pandemic numbers.

The resurgence in air travel is being fueled by pent-up demand and the availability of vaccines, along with an apparent lull in virus cases since summer's big wave. The Transportation Security Administration says that passenger checkpoints are nearly as busy now as they were in 2019, before the pandemic.

Airlines have been ramping up capacity to meet this demand, but the industry is hampered by a lagging workforce recovery. They're struggling to hire more staff, especially air crews. That's raised concerns that major airlines could be in for a rough December.

"Like a lot of industries, they are competing for people," said Peter McNally, an an-

alyst at Third Bridge. "They know what they have to do, it's just a matter of going out and doing it."

Major airlines encouraged thousands of workers to quit last year when air travel collapsed during the pandemic. They were barred from laying off workers as a condition of federal pandemic relief. Those workers have not returned quickly enough, leaving the current workforce stretched. In many cases flight crews are reaching their limit of allowable hours, forcing flight cancellations because there aren't enough cabin crews.

American Airlines faced such a situation in late October when it had to cancel more than a thousand flights because it was short-staffed. Southwest Airlines also made headlines for flight cancellations in October. Both airlines cited weather problems, though

analysts have said that any actual weather or air traffic issues have just made the root problem of staffing shortages worse.

"One of the problems the airlines had so far in their coverage was the unpredictable nature in booking," McNally said. "People are booking travel with less time between booking and travel and that makes staffing harder."

American Airlines' labor unions warned for months that the airline was scheduling more flights than its workforce could handle.

"These cases showed just how quickly weather and now staffing shortages can ripple through airlines just as they are seeking to maximize fall revenue within exceedingly slim operational margins," said airline industry data provider Cirium in a recent report.

American, Delta and United spent the first half of



Travelers enter security checkpoints at Logan International Airport, in Boston, Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021, the day before Thanksgiving.

Associated Press

2021 slowly recovering from the worst of the pandemic. Each airline saw modest improvements in available seat miles, a key measure of passenger capacity. That measure had nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels by the third quarter.

The push to increase passenger capacity may have

been too much for some airlines. Employment for air travel is still down more than 9% from peak levels just before the virus pandemic gutted the industry, according to Labor Department data. Staffing levels will likely have to keep increasing to help maintain flight capacity for a full revenue recovery. □



# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 Aquarium

1 Like fish  
good 45 Saloon  
brownies orders

6 Conjecture 46 English  
11 Tibia's county  
end

12 Tightwad

13 Mortise's partner

14 Copier need

15 "Beetle Bailey" dog

17 Auction signals

18 Gift toppers

20 Fresh

22 Unconscious

23 Morgan of movies

26 Earthy color

28 "Go ahead, ask"

29 1986 World Series champs

31 Join the crew

32 Spot

33 Rainbow maker

34 Church group

36 Pull along

38 Authored

40 Friend of d'Artagnan

43 Buenos —

DOWN

1 Wrestling need

2 Early hour

3 "The situation is quite clear"

4 Casino attraction

5 Circus sight

6 Be decisive

7 Lead the way

8 "You can't arrest me!"

9 Call for part

M	A	S	S	C	O	R	P	U	S
A	C	H	E	U	N	E	A	S	E
I	R	O	N	R	E	G	R	E	T
N	E	W	D	E	L	H	I		
		T	I	M	I	N	S	E	T
J	O	I	N	T	T	A	N	G	O
A	R	M				O	A	R	
V	E	E	R	S	B	A	W	D	Y
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		S	E	N	O	R	I	T	A
A	C	T	I	V	E		I	R	A
B	O	O	G	I	E	C	E	N	T
C	O	N	N	E	D	A	S	K	S

Yesterday's answer

10	Goes astray	30	Sluggish Williams
16	Paddle's kin	33	Partners
18	Wader, e.g.	34	Do the decks
19	Pained cry	35	Lake near Buffalo
21	Brooklyn team	37	Velocity
23	Stew	39	Snaky shape
24	Writer Oz	41	Vein
25	Small amphibian	42	Combo instrument
27	Transistor		

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
		15			16		17		
18	19				20	21			
22				23				24	25
26			27			28			
29					30		31		
		32				33			
34	35				36	37			
38				39		40		41	42
43						44			
45						46			

12-10

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-10

CRYPTOQUOTE

IM QYHHAU KO TKEA, WMY  
OAAU IXPAA IXKOSQ: V  
ZKQXFMOA, V FVIBFMOA VOU  
V EYOOW FMOA, PAFV  
LHAOKPA

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: NOBODY CAN COUNT THEMSELVES AN ARTIST UNLESS THEY CAN CARRY A PICTURE IN THEIR HEAD BEFORE THEY PAINT IT — CLAUDE MONET

## Group: Pandemic tech tools raise risk of everyday tracking



A view of an iPhone showing the new NHS COVID-19 mobile phone application after the app went live on Thursday morning in London, Thursday, Sept. 24, 2020.

Associated Press

By KELVIN CHAN  
AP Business Writer

**LONDON (AP)** — Tech tools like digital contact tracing apps and artificial intelligence that European governments rolled out to combat COVID-19 failed to play a key role in solving the pandemic and now threaten to make such monitoring widely accepted, a new report shows. The health surveillance technologies that many European countries deployed after the coronavirus pandemic erupted last year were often adopted without enough transparency, safeguards or democratic debate, according to a report released Thursday by AlgorithmWatch, a nonprofit research group that tracks the impact of AI systems. Authorities scrambled to develop new technologies or use existing ones to combat the virus's spread. They built digital contact tracing apps to track who infected people had been around and later developed vaccine passports to verify people had received COVID-19 shots in order to travel or get into concerts, restaurants and other busi-

nesses. Some used drones and devices to enforce social distancing rules. Many of these systems used "automated decision-making" technology, which reduced the complex social challenges posed by COVID-19 to a set of technology issues in need of tech solutions, the Berlin-based nonprofit said. AlgorithmWatch acknowledged that technology played a role in helping save some lives during the pandemic, such as through the use of artificial intelligence to efficiently distribute vaccines. But the report's authors said the most worrying trend was how the pandemic was used to "further entrench and normalize the surveillance, monitoring, measuring and prediction of an increasing number of daily activities now essentially including public and personal health purposes."

That's an even larger problem considering the "bugs, fakery, data leaks" the group says are present in such tools, and the growing number of uses for information from COVID-fighting

tech around the world. Among the group's recommendations: use an "evidence based" approach when rolling out automated decision-making technology and clearly limit its use to avoid "mass opaque deployments" that are bad for democracy.

The report documented the false starts and pitfalls that came with rushing out new and untested technology, focusing mainly on European countries.

In the early days of an initial 2020 lockdown, Belgian police planned to use drones to monitor social distancing but dropped the idea after a backlash. There was also a move to use security cameras originally installed to fight serious crime and terrorism in an example of "function creep" — where technology is used for a different purpose than originally intended. That brought an expanded risk of a "surveillance society," the report said.

Contact tracing apps flourished. Most are based on technology jointly developed by Apple and Google and use Bluetooth signals to anonymously log any smartphones that have been in close, extended contact with a phone belonging to someone who has tested positive.

But uptake was spotty. For example, there's evidence the Cyprus government's tracing app "was not widely adopted," the report said.

The Dutch government's CoronaCheck vaccination status app was plagued with glitches. Because of the decentralized and privacy sensitive design, its QR code couldn't be revoked if a user tested positive, allowing continued access to places that required proof of vaccination or a negative test result.

It was also possible to manipulate the app to get a fake test result, the report said.

The Dutch health ministry did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. □

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# To learn about climate quality, scientists turn to drones

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT  
Associated Press

Three ocean drones were launched from Rhode Island Thursday and will travel along the Gulf Stream, collecting data in tough winter conditions that would be challenging for traditional ships with crews. Saildrone, headquartered in Alameda, California, makes autonomous surface vehicles powered by the wind and sun to measure climate quality data and do mapping in remote oceans for scientists worldwide. The company launched the drones from Newport, Rhode Island, on a mission to sail the strong ocean currents in the North Atlantic for six months. The goal is to gather information that's needed to improve medium and long-range weather forecasting, and to account for how much human-produced carbon dioxide the Gulf Stream can absorb. The carbon data could help improve the models that others use to hold countries accountable for their goals for lowering emissions, said Susan Ryan, a vice president at Saildrone. Scientists from the University of Rhode Island and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts are leading the mission. The work is paid for with a roughly \$1 million grant from the philanthropic arm of Google, Google.org, and its Impact Challenge



A Saildrone Explorer un-crewed surface vehicle, or ocean drone, is prepared for launch at a dock, in Newport, R.I., Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021.

Associated Press

on Climate. Collecting data along the Gulf Stream is extremely challenging in the winter because of the strong currents and fierce storms, Ryan said. The carbon budget released at the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow uses ocean carbon uptake estimates generated by models and statistical methods that fill in gaps when there is no data from the site, but that can yield a variety of results and uncertainty, Ryan added. Philip Browne, a research scientist at ECMWF, said the Gulf Stream also has a big impact on weather forecasts and climate predictions, and they're excited to use the drones to collect data from the physically and scientifically challenging region. Saildrone vehicles with modified wings captured the first live drone video this fall inside a category 4 hurricane, Hurricane Sam, and completed the first un-

manned circumnavigation of Antarctica in 2019, according to the company. The company's first science mission was to the Arctic in 2015. One of their drones operated along the Gulf Stream in 2019 for about 18 days. "In that short period, we collected as many ocean CO2 measurements in the Gulf Stream for the month of February as had ever been recorded in the entire history of oceanography," Jaime Palter, a URI carbon

scientist and a co-principal investigator of the mission, said in a statement. The three drones are expected to be retrieved in Newport next year. Data will be sent back to the scientists via satellite as the drones traverse the Gulf Stream. □

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Surinam	582 7896

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**Child Abuse Prevention**  
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# Boxing among 3 Olympic sports in danger of losing 2028 spot

By **GRAHAM DUNBAR**

AP Sports Writer

**GENEVA (AP)** — Boxing, weightlifting and modern pentathlon were set a target of about 18 months on Thursday to make changes in order to keep their status as Olympic sports for the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

The governing bodies of boxing and weightlifting were described as problem children by International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach, who has long voiced concerns with the leadership of those sports and issues with corruption and doping.

Modern pentathlon has effectively been told by the IOC to remove equestrian jumping from the event, provoking a backlash from angry athletes.

The high-profile incident of a coach striking a horse at the Tokyo Olympics has undermined modern pentathlon's reputation despite more than 100 years in the Games since being created by IOC founder Pierre de Coubertin.

All three sports have been left off the initial list of 28 on the 2028 program, which will be put to IOC members for approval in February.



**President of Brazil's Olympic Committee Carlos Arthur Nuzman, left, and International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, right, visit Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Jan. 22, 2014.**

Associated Press

The list of approved sports includes skateboarding, surfing and sports climbing. All three made successful Olympic debuts in Tokyo and look to be locked in for the future as the IOC chases younger audiences.

It also sets them to receive a share of future Olympic broadcasting income, which is currently worth at

least \$15 million to each sport.

The three sports left isolated Thursday still have a "pathway for inclusion" at the 2023 annual meeting of the IOC membership, Bach said.

They need to "demonstrate to the satisfaction" of the IOC executive board they have made changes vari-

ously to the governance and organizational culture of the sports. Modern pentathlon also needs to replace horse riding with a more inclusive discipline accessible to young people worldwide.

Soccer is still on the Los Angeles program, but Bach put FIFA on notice because of its plans to play World

Cups every two years, instead of every four. The current cycle of men's World Cups would put any biennial tournament in a direct clash with the Los Angeles Olympics.

The World Cup plan, which has faced resistance in Europe and South America, is being pushed by FIFA president Gianni Infantino, but momentum has stalled in recent weeks.

Bach said the IOC still had not been consulted about the plan, but he is due to talk Saturday with Infantino — an elected IOC member — at an online meeting of Olympic sports leaders.

Other sports can also be added to the Los Angeles sports program in 2023, when local organizers are scheduled to ask for medal events they want to host.

Baseball and softball are a potential choice. They were added by organizers to the Tokyo Olympics, along with karate, to appeal to Japanese fans.

Baseball, softball and karate were not requested by organizers of the 2024 Paris Olympics, which will have breakdancing in addition to skateboarding, surfing and sports climbing. □

# Former top-ranked Mauresmo French Open's 1st female director



**Amelie Mauresmo, of France, speaks during an interview at the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Saturday, July 16, 2016, in Newport, R.I.**

Associated Press

By **SAMUEL PETREQUIN**

Two-time major champion Amelie Mauresmo was appointed as tournament director of the French Open on Thursday, replacing Guy Forget and becoming the first woman to hold the po-

sition.

Forget, whose contract was to expire at the end of the year, resigned this week, citing communication issues with new French tennis federation president Gilles Moretton.

The 42-year-old Mauresmo, who was inspired to play tennis after watching Yannick Noah win the 1983 French Open, became the first player from France — male or female — to reach No. 1 in the modern era, on Sept. 13, 2004. She was No. 1 for 39 weeks in her career. "This tournament has made me dream since my early days, has created a vocation in me," Mauresmo told a press conference on Thursday.

But she was never able to emulate Noah's feat of winning on the clay at Roland Garros, failing to go beyond the quarterfinals at the Grand Slam tournament in Paris, where she struggled to withstand the pressure in front of her home crowd.

Mauresmo, whose backhand delighted tennis aficionados around the world,

also won the Fed Cup with France in 2003 and the WTA Tour championship in 2005. She won the Olympic silver medal in Athens in 2004.

After her playing career, Mauresmo coached one of the top men's players, Andy Murray. She was also France's Fed Cup women's team captain and did TV commentary work during Roland Garros this year.

Mauresmo is the second woman to be appointed as a Grand Slam director after Stacey Allaster, the U.S. Open's tournament boss.

"Yes, I am very proud to be the first woman director of Roland Garros, but I also believe that it is necessary to emphasize why I am here, other (reasons) than my gender," Mauresmo said. "I would like this question to be no longer relevant today. We need

to aim and move toward something more egalitarian, regardless of gender. It doesn't matter what gender you are, it's just what skills you have."

Mauresmo's contract runs to 2024, the French federation said. Forget had been running the tournament at Roland Garros since 2016. He was a former tennis player who achieved a career-best ranking of No. 4 in the early 1990s.

Stade Roland Garros had undergone a major facelift during Forget's tenure, with the addition of a retractable roof on Court Philippe Chatrier and the building of a stunning new court surrounded by greenhouses filled with exotic plants.

Under Forget's leadership, the French Open also introduced night sessions this year. □



# EXPLAINER: What does an Olympic diplomatic boycott achieve?

By GRAHAM DUNBAR

**GENEVA (AP)** — Diplomatic boycotts of the Olympics aim to snub host nations while keeping athletes free to compete.

A small cascade of government boycotts hit China on Wednesday, less than two months before the Beijing Olympics open.

The impact of these political weapons on athletes at the games should be close to zero, and viewers should see no difference in their broadcast content.

Their aim is calculated to hurt the pride of host nations such as China, which often have both sports and politics mixed into their motives for staging events as big as an Olympics or soccer's World Cup.

In Australia, then the United Kingdom and Canada, governments announced their refusal to send officials to the Winter Games being held Feb. 4-20. The move against China started in the United States on Monday.

Those countries are long-time diplomatic allies that want to shine attention on China's human rights record, and especially the treatment of its Muslim-majority Uyghur people that some call genocide.

The sting will also be felt by the International Olympic Committee, whose leaders have a keen sense of its potential place in world politics even while touting the neutrality it is bound to by the Olympic Charter.

IOC leaders like to burnish the Olympic brand by saying their sports event is the only one to bring more than 200 national teams together in peace and friendship as an example to the world.

Any diversion from the message of global unity is unwelcome.

## OLYMPIC MISSION

The Olympic Charter is the code of rules and bylaws that governs the IOC and "sets forth the conditions for the celebration of the Olympic Games."

Rule 2 relating to the "Mission and role of the IOC" helps explain why any boycott is treated as an affront to its principles.



A crew member leaps to fix a logo for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics before a launch ceremony to reveal the motto for the Winter Olympics and Paralympics in Beijing on Sept. 17, 2021.

Associated Press

It includes: "To take action to strengthen the unity of the Olympic Movement, to protect its independence, to maintain and promote its political neutrality and to preserve the autonomy of sport."

For the IOC, political neutrality should mean not calling out an Olympic host nation for its policies and conduct outside of sports or not connected to staging the games.

"We always ask for as much respect as possible from the political world and the least possible interference on our sports and Olympic world and ideals," senior IOC member Juan Antonio Samaranch said this week.

## BOYCOTT HISTORY

The IOC still carries emotional scars from the peak period of more than 100 countries combined staging full boycotts of three straight Summer Games from 1976 to 1984.

The 1976 Montreal Olympics was hit mostly by African countries protesting New Zealand taking part after its rugby team toured Apartheid-era South Africa. The 1980 Moscow Olympics went ahead without the United States and dozens

of other teams protesting the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.

The Soviet bloc and some allies retaliated with a boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Thousands of athletes missed competing at an Olympic Games four decades ago. None should miss the Beijing Winter Games because of a diplomatic boycott.

## VIP VISITORS

Who will stay at home instead of traveling to Beijing next February? Senior lawmakers and diplomatic officials, mostly, when the opening ceremony is held Feb. 4.

There is no diplomatic obligation on heads of state to attend an Olympic Games, and attending a Winter Games is less of a hot ticket than the summer edition.

It is, however, nice to show up for an old ally's party or

build alliances with potential new friends.

Then-President George W. Bush went to Beijing for the opening of the 2008 Summer Games that was supposed to be a coming-out party for a more welcoming China.

In July, first lady Jill Biden led the American contingent to the Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

Going to the games can also create diplomatic issues, as Vice President Mike Pence found at the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea.

Pence found himself in an awkward situation sitting close to North Korea's delegation at an opening ceremony at Pyeongchang that became a celebration of a relatively short-lived thaw in relations between the Korean neighbors.

The Korean accord had been warmly encouraged

by the IOC, seeming to bend its definition of political neutrality to the limit.

## CHINA'S REACTION

China's reaction to the spreading diplomatic boycott has ranged from "not bothered at all" to "clearly quite bothered."

The U.S. announcement Monday prompted the Chinese Embassy in Washington to publish in a tweet: "In fact, no one would care about whether these people come or not, and it has no impact whatsoever on the #Beijing2022 to be successfully held."

In Beijing, the foreign ministry said the Americans were interfering "out of ideological prejudice and based on lies and rumors."

Australia was dismissed Wednesday as "immature, arrogant and stupid to follow the US" by the Chinese state-run Global Times newspaper. "Countries with rationality would think of the interests of their own people instead of cooperating with the US' futile stunt."

## FUTURE REPRISALS

Adding piquancy to the current boycott is that it's being done by reliable recent and future Olympic host nations.

The U.S. and Australia hosting the Summer Games, in 2028 at Los Angeles and 2032 in Brisbane, could provoke Chinese reprisals.

American Olympic officials are also likely to seek IOC support for staging the Winter Games again at Salt Lake City, which was also the 2002 host.

Canada hosted the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games and when London staged the 2012 Olympics, the mayor of the city was Boris Johnson. He announced the U.K.'s diplomatic boycott in its parliament Wednesday as prime minister. □







# Holiday Opening Hours

Friday	10 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Saturday	11 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Sunday	12 December	9:00AM - 6:00PM
Monday	13 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Tuesday	14 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Wednesday	15 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Thursday	16 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Friday	17 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Saturday	18 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Sunday	19 December	9:00AM - 6:00PM
Monday	20 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Tuesday	21 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Wednesday	22 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Thursday	23 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Friday	24 December	8:00AM - 6:00PM
Saturday	25 December	Closed
Sunday	26 December	Closed
Monday	27 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Tuesday	28 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Wednesday	29 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Thursday	30 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Friday	31 December	8:00AM - 2:00PM
Saturday	1 January	Closed
Sunday	2 January	9:00AM - 6:00PM

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